



Bakalářská práce

Hunger Games: The traumas and coping mechanism of the main character

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Hunger Games: The traumas and coping mechanism of the main character

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This bachelor's thesis focuses mainly on the traumas of the main character named Katniss Everdeen and her ways of coping with it. The work will be divided into four parts. The first part analyzes her moral and impulsive choices and the meaning of them through the book series. The second part discusses her mental health conditions with which she struggles on her way to freedom. The next section gives us a look at Katniss as a symbol of revolution and her part in the fight for change. The last section of this work examines the role of gender in the book series. Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá traumaty, kterými hlavní postava jménem Katniss Everdeen trpí a její vyrovnávání s těmito situacemi. Práce je rozdělena do čtyř částí. První část analyzuje její morální a impulzivní rozhodnutí a jejich vliv v průběhu knih. Druhá část diskutuje o Katnissině mentálním stavu, s kterým se potýká na cestě ke svobodě. Další sekce pohlíží na Katniss, jako symbol revoluce a jakou roli hraje v boji za změnu. Poslední sekce zkoumá roli v pohledu na pohlaví v knižní sérii

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Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na psychiku ženské protagonistky ve slavné trilogii Suzanne Collinsové, *The Hunger Games*. Konkrétně zkoumá kognitivní procesy Katniss Everdeenové v náročných situacích a nadále pak analyzuje emoční dopad, který na ní tyto situace mají. Úvodní část poskytuje stručný popis příběhu, zatímco následující část pak analyzuje morální dilemata, se kterými se Katniss během své cesty setkává. Nadále pak práce zkoumá traumatické zážitky, kterým čelí a poskytuje pohled na poruchy duševního zdraví, zejména na posttraumatickou stresovou poruchu (PTSD). Tato práce svou analýzou vysvětluje složitý vztah mezi procesem rozhodování a emoční odolností, který je zobrazen Suzanne Collinsovou.

Klíčová slova

morální dilema, Katniss, větší dobro, volby, emoce, trauma, posttraumatická stresová porucha, *The Hunger Games*

Abstract

This Bachelor thesis focuses on the psyche of the female protagonist within Suzanne Collins's renowned trilogy, *The Hunger Games*. Specifically, it explores Katniss Everdeen's cognitive process during challenging circumstances and the lasting emotional toll her journey leaves upon her. The initial part provides a brief overview of the narrative, while the subsequent section analyses the moral dilemmas encountered by Katniss through the story. Furthermore, the thesis examines the traumatic experiences she endures, shedding light on the mental health issues, mainly on Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Through this analysis, the thesis explains the intricate relationship between the decision-making process and emotional resilience as depicted by Suzanne Collins.

Key words

moral dilemmas, Katniss, greater good, choices, emotion, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder, *The Hunger Games*

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Introduction

The main aim of this thesis is to conduct an analysis of Katniss Everdeen's moral reasoning in *The Hunger Games*. This study not only explores the ethical quandaries she encounters but also scrutinizes the psychological distress associated with those choices. Furthermore, it investigates these aspects from the perspective of her gender, as a woman thrust into a stressful environment.

The opening chapter functions as an entry point into the complex universe of *The Hunger Games* books, providing a brief explanation of Katniss's narrative arc. It introduces key events that shape her character as a female protagonist and subsequently as a symbol of rebellion within the oppressive regime of Panem. This chapter lays a foundation for an analysis of Katniss's internal struggles, shedding light on the profound moral dilemmas she faces.

The second chapter focuses on the moral dilemmas that are laid upon Katniss throughout her narrative. It examines particular instances in which she is compelled to make a decision. These instances range from volunteering to protect her sister to killing others in order to secure her own survival. Additionally, the analysis explores the ethical aspects of those decisions, assessing if they are morally wrong or right.

The third chapter examines the traumatic events that impact Katniss's life. These traumas leave lasting scars on her psyche and play a crucial role in shaping her decision-making process. Furthermore, this chapter explores the mental health struggles that arise from these traumas.

Ultimately, these chapters all serve the function of providing insight into Katniss's comprehensive growth. It is argued that her cognitive process is profoundly influenced by her emotional condition and conversely, her emotional state is impacted by her decision-making. Collectively, these two illuminate Suzanne Collins's

exceptional portrayal of a disturbed individual navigating through a society governed by an oppressive rule.

1. The Story

The Hunger Games is a dystopian book series, written by the American author Suzanne Collins, which was later adapted into a movie trilogy. The books were published between 2008 to 2010, while the movies were made shortly after. Both the books and the movies are popular, particularly among teenagers and young adults.

The story is set in a dystopian state called Panem, which consists of the Capitol and twelve districts. In order to maintain control over the districts, the Capitol hosts the Hunger Games every year, where two children from each district are chosen by lottery to fight for their lives in a televised battle.

During the 74th Games reaping, the protagonist, Katniss Everdeen, volunteers as a tribute to fight in place of her 12-year-old sister Primrose. The other tribute is Peeta Mellark, who later becomes an important part of Katniss's journey to save Panem. Before the Games, Katniss and the other tributes spend several days in the Capitol, where they train, present themselves on television, and showcase their skills to get ranked.

Throughout the games, Katniss experiences a lot of physical and mental trauma that leaves lasting scars. Those traumas include witnessing a little girl's death or surviving through a natural disaster created by the gamemakers. While fighting to survive, she comes across injured Peeta. Despite not being fond of him, she decides to save his life and they grow close. After a brutal fight with the last tribute, Katniss and Peeta are the only ones left. However, the rules state that only one person can win. In a desperate move, they decide to commit suicide by eating poisonous berries. Luckily, they are declared joint winners, making them the first pair to ever win the games.

After the first Hunger Games, Katniss returns to her life in District Twelve and slowly resumes her routine. Everything seems to be going well until she sees an

announcement stating that for the next Hunger Games, only the winners from each district would be reaped. As the only female winner from District Twelve, she knows she would be forced to participate, but there is a chance for Peeta to avoid it. Unfortunately, the odds are not in Katniss's favour, and Peeta volunteered as a tribute instead of Haymitch, who is a previous victor of the Hunger Games and also Peeta's and Katniss's mentor. Once again, the pair goes to the Games together to fight for their lives.

Because of the preceding events, a rebellion begins to emerge throughout the districts. Many tributes in the games are involved in the covert rebellion and pledge to safeguard Katniss as the emblem of hope. In the conclusion of the 75th games, Katniss successfully flees with one of the tributes, named Finnick. Peeta and other tributes are apprehended by the Capitol and subsequently subjected to torture.

Katniss is transported to what is left of District Thirteen, which had been previously destroyed for fighting against the Capitol. In the underground bunker of District Thirteen, Katniss forms a plan, along with the leader of the rebellion, President Coin, to save Peeta and the other tributes from further torture. The attempt to save them is successful, but not everything is as it seemed. As a result of the torture, Peeta is brainwashed and his only mission is to eliminate Katniss.

Even after Peeta's attempt on Katniss's life, she brings him along on her journey to occupy the Capitol. The gamemakers are forced to arm the city streets to prevent Katniss and her team from entering. Despite all the traps, the team manages to reach the walls of the Presidential Palace. There, Katniss witnesses the bombing of the people trying to enter the palace, and her younger sister dies while providing medical aid to the injured.

When the Presidential Palace is taken over, President Snow calls for a meeting with Katniss as his last wish. While they talk, Snow explains to her that the bombing is the work of President Coin as a power move to turn the people against him. After hearing this information, Katniss decides to take action. During Snow's public execution, she kills President Coin instead of him because, in Katniss's eyes, they are both the same. Afterwards, Katniss returns home to District Twelve, where she forms a new family with Peeta.

2. Moral Choices

Through the story, Katniss encounters a series of difficult moral dilemmas, each presenting her with a profound test of her character and principles. From her decision to volunteer as a tribute to save her sister from certain death, to creating a web of lies to survive, and even the haunting prospect of taking lives to save countless others, Katniss is faced with multitude of ethical dilemmas that challenge her to her core.

Her decisions are not merely black and white; they are related to a variety of moral philosophies, reflecting on the complexity of human nature. Influenced by the notion of the greater good, Katniss often finds herself weighing the lives of many against the needs of a few, or even against her own desires. Yet, intertwined with a sense of altruism are the raw instincts for self-preservation, compelling her to make choices driven by a primal urge to survive at any cost.

Moreover, as it is shown, as a woman, Katniss's moral compass is further guided by the complexity of her own gender-based experience. She acts not only with logic, but also with intuition, drawing upon her emotions that shape her understanding of right and wrong. Her choices are arguably as much a reflection of her individual identity as they are a response to the societal pressures and expectations placed upon her.

Each decision Katniss makes serves as a turning point, testing her resolve and shaping her identity in profound ways. As she grapples with the fundamental questions of morality, her journey becomes a compelling exploration of the human condition — a testament to the complexities of ethics in a world where survival demands sacrifice and every choice carries weight. In the following subchapters, these specific ethical quandaries are analysed through the lens of moral theories, which shed light on Katniss's decision-making process in stressful situations.

2.1. Saving her Sister and Killing Other Children

“I volunteer! [...] I volunteer as tribute!” (Collins 2008, 22) These were the words that left Katniss’s lips the moment she saw Primrose walk up to the reaping stage. When Primrose, Katniss’s sister, is arbitrarily chosen to be the tribute for the 74th Hunger Games, Katniss volunteers to take her place. She acts as Primrose’s protector through the entire story, and Primrose is essentially the main reason Katniss survives the first Hunger Games. As Vázquez et al. (2019, 4) mention in their study, identity fusion plays a significant role in one’s willingness to sacrifice themselves for a sibling. Therefore, the first reason for Katniss to volunteer is the fact that she and Primrose are siblings.

Another reason is the fact that their father has previously passed away. Katniss may feel a strong desire to protect her sister, as children without a father figure often feel the need to do heroic acts (Schwartz 2017, 3). Not only does Katniss have to act as a hero to save Primrose from her certain death, but she also has to act as her surrogate mother. After their father’s death, their mother falls into a depression-like state where she is not able to provide a stable home for them. This is one of the stages of grief that a wife goes through after her husband’s death. The widow usually becomes hostile towards friends and family (Marris 2004, 21).

Katniss’s choice could also be connected to utilitarianism. As Sandel (2009, 34 - 35) explains, the main point of utilitarianism is to choose the option that produces the most happiness for the majority of people. Accordingly, it can be argued that her choice to sacrifice herself was not for her own happiness but for the happiness of her mother and sister.

At the same time, the reality of the Hunger Games arena stands in contrast to Katniss’s sacrifice. In the televised games, she will be forced to kill other children who

may be the same age as her or even her sister, meaning kids ranging from ages 12 to 18. Katniss struggles with the idea of killing others and attempts to evade any potential conflict until she is forced to do so in order to stay alive. This ethical quandary is stuck in Katniss's mind the entire time leading to her first kill. During the games, she is consumed by the thought of survival for both herself and her family, but as Michael Sandel (2009, 23) points out, it is still unethical to kill innocent people, even if it is for the greater good.

The article entitled "Gender Differences in Solving Moral Dilemmas: Emotional Engagement, Care and Utilitarian Orientation" (Cordellieri et al. 2020, 360) presents an empirical investigation on both female and male individuals to ascertain the potential influence of gender on moral reasoning. The findings revealed that women exhibited a lower propensity for association with violent behaviours compared to men. The study participants were presented with several moral dilemmas and were required to select the course of action they would undertake in each given situation. One of the ethical predicaments stated that a decision had to be made regarding the sacrifice of one individual in order to preserve the life of another. In this particular scenario, the woman opted to abstain from engaging in the act of taking another person's life, whereas the men made the choice to proceed with the execution. In another predicament, a group of children found themselves in need of medication, with the only possible way of obtaining it being through the act of robbing a pharmaceutical establishment by the participant of the study. Notably, the female participants displayed a greater inclination towards engaging in the pharmacy robbery, driven by their desire to safeguard the children, even if it meant resorting to violence. Ultimately, the study findings indicate that women tend to base their decisions on emotions, care, and empathy towards others. (Cordellieri et al. 2020, 360 - 361). Katniss, driven by

her emotional state, made the decision to refrain from putting other children at risk until circumstances compelled her to do so. Pursued relentlessly and tormented by a group of formidable individuals, she resorted to taking certain measures in order to preserve her own life, even if those measures involved acts of violence, such as blowing up a camp or engaging in acts of murder.

Yet, during the games, Katniss not only kills other tributes to survive, but she also protects some of them. At one point, Katniss encounters a twelve-year-old girl named Rue, who has been following her around. Katniss is drawn to Rue because she resembles Prim. In connection to identity fusion, the fact that Rue reminds Katniss of her sister is the reason that Katniss is willing to protect her (Vázquez et al. 2019, 4). When Rue dies, Katniss lays her body in a bed of Primroses, the flowers that her sister is named after. This act of kindness sparks an uprising in district 11, where Rue's family resides.

Although this gesture seems like a selfless act in the movies, in the books Katniss does this not only to honour Rue's memory but also to prove the point that the Capitol does not own their lives: "I want to do something right here, right now, to shame them, to make them accountable, to show the Capitol that whatever they do or force us to do there is a part of every tribute they can't own. That Rue was more than a piece in their Games. And so am I" (Collins 2008, 236 - 237). This intentionally rebellious act served as a perfect opportunity to take a first step towards a future revolution against the ideology that governs the districts and the Capitol.

Snow, under the belief that he can render Katniss ineffective as a potential opponent, plans to re-enter her into the arena due to her status as the sole female victor from District 12. This decision exposes her to the risk of being eliminated by other tributes. The plan devised by Snow fails to unfold as intended, since a considerable

number of the tributes firmly believe in the necessity to halt the oppressive reign of the Capitol and the barbaric tradition of the Hunger Games. Many of the past tributes enter the arena with the sole purpose of rallying behind Katniss, lending their support to her cause. Consequently, the tributes become divided into two factions: one set on eliminating Katniss and another set on safeguarding her and the cause she represents. Initially, Katniss harbours scepticism towards their allegiance, however, her doubts gradually dissipate as they provide assistance in ensuring the safety of both herself and Peeta.

In the present circumstance, Katniss continues to wrestle with the ethical quandary of terminating the lives of fellow tributes, despite their exclusive intent to eliminate her. She decides to approach the situation from a utilitarian standpoint, a perspective that can be analysed by considering the trolley problem outlined by Michael Sandel in his book "*What's the Right Thing to Do?*" (Sandel 2009, 21 - 22). He presents a scenario in which we assume the role of a locomotive engineer responsible for a train that is approaching a track where five individuals are currently working. Regrettably, we are faced with the grim reality that if we do not intervene, these five individuals will meet their demise. Our options are limited as we are unable to halt the train's progress. However, we do possess the ability to alter its course by activating a railroad switch, thereby diverting the train onto an alternate track where only one person is present. By choosing to activate the switch, we would effectively save the lives of the five workers, at the cost of the one individual on the alternative track. Conversely, if we opt to maintain the train's trajectory along the original track, we would tragically sacrifice the lives of the five workers while sparing the sole individual situated on the different track (Sandel 2009, 30 - 31). Katniss, like the majority of individuals, leans towards the notion of sacrificing one individual to save

five. Consequently, she opts to eliminate the other tribute in order to protect those who have aided her and are integral to the rebellion. Her choice is rooted in the principle of prioritizing the welfare of a greater number of individuals, with the tributes supporting her playing a crucial role in the ongoing rebellion. Their demise would result in the collapse of the rebellion.

In conclusion, the decision of Katniss Everdeen to volunteer as tribute for the 74th Hunger Games is driven by intricate psychological and ethical elements, including her role as Primrose's sibling, her aspiration to safeguard her family, and her utilitarian deliberations. During the course of the Games, Katniss grapples with moral dilemmas, demonstrating emotional engagement and care for others, as emphasized by Cordellieri et al. (2020, 360). Her acts of kindness, such as honouring Rue's memory, spark rebellion against the Capitol, challenging its oppressive regime. This utilitarian approach is further manifested through the act of sacrificing other tributes in order to safeguard her allies and advance the rebellion's cause, thereby setting the stage for her continued ethical deliberations. These themes endure as Katniss confronts ethical dilemmas regarding her association with Peeta and her sentiments amidst the ongoing uprising.

2.2. Faking Love Connection and Staying Alive Together

In the relationship between Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark is a central focus that evolves in complexity throughout the narrative. Their bond is marked by its unusual, changeable nature, characterized by moments of tension, manipulation, and genuine emotion. Initially, their connection seems to stem from their shared traumatic experiences in the Hunger Games arena, indicating a foundation built on mutual understanding and survival instincts. However, their relationship also contains

elements of strategic manipulation as Katniss and Peeta navigate the treacherous political landscape of Panem. They must grapple with the conscious choice of either faking emotions or genuinely expressing them, fully aware that their actions could influence the audience's perception and impact their chances of survival. Despite its potential superficial or utilitarian origins, their relationship gradually develops into something deeper, potentially blossoming into a sincere and genuine love.

Before the events depicted in the Hunger Games books, Katniss and her family were experiencing severe hunger, a predicament shared by many individuals in District 12. In a significant gesture, Peeta offers Katniss a glimmer of hope by presenting her with a loaf of bread that had been burned in his family's bakery and was destined for disposal. This act of benevolence serves as the cornerstone for their future relationship and establishes a reciprocal bond between them. Consequently, when Peeta later aligns himself with the Career tributes, who willingly volunteer and dedicate their lives to training for the Games in pursuit of fame, Katniss is confronted with conflicting emotions of betrayal and gratitude. She is faced with a moral dilemma that challenges her reasoning, as Cordellieri et. al.'s (2020, 360) research on gender disparities in moral decision-making illuminates.

As previously mentioned, women tend to exhibit heightened levels of empathy and compassion when resolving ethical dilemmas, often prioritizing the welfare of others over self-interest. Additionally, they frequently intertwine their emotional state with their moral judgments. In this particular scenario, Katniss's internal struggle between remaining loyal to Peeta and succumbing to the demands of self-preservation is influenced by her inherent sense of empathy and compassion, as evidenced by her initial indebtedness to Peeta for his act of kindness. "To this day, I cannot shake the

connection between this boy, Peeta Mellark, and the bread that gave me hope, [...] I feel like I owe him something and I hate owing people.” (Collins 2008, 32)

Moreover, Bandura’s social cognitive theory (1986, 111) provides further insights into Katniss’s moral reasoning. Bandura posits that individuals acquire knowledge through observing and imitating the behaviour of others, as well as through the consequences of their actions (111). In the case of Katniss, her upbringing in the impoverished District 12 and her interactions with Peeta and other characters play a significant role in shaping her moral perspective and guiding her decisions in the arena. Bandura’s theory suggests that Katniss’s choice to prioritize compassion over personal gain or revenge may be influenced by her past experiences and the moral values she has internalized from her surroundings.

Subsequently, Katniss rescues Peeta following an attempt by the Career tributes to eliminate him. Through this action, Katniss further demonstrates that her ethical judgment regarding Peeta and their bond is rooted in her emotions and appreciation for his previous kindness. Following this, Katniss contemplates a tactical plan to present herself and Peeta as lovers destined to be together, understanding that this portrayal could lead the audience to send them gifts that might guarantee their survival. Upon becoming the first pair to survive the Hunger Games, their mentor Haymitch Abernathy advises Katniss that they must uphold the illusion of a romantic relationship for their continued safety as victors. Acknowledging the influence of their connection in shaping public opinion and potentially sparking rebellion, Katniss and Peeta make a strategic choice to fabricate a romantic relationship, as directed by Haymitch. This deliberate action, though morally questionable, serves as a method of manipulating the Capitol’s perception of them as star-crossed lovers to ensure their ongoing security.

The decision made by Katniss to fake a romantic affiliation with Peeta may be regarded through a utilitarian lens. As previously stated, utilitarianism aims to achieve optimal welfare for the largest possible number of people (Sandel 2009, 34 - 35). Through the fabrication of their relationship, Katniss successfully prevents Peeta's demise within the arena. Subsequently, she effectively safeguarded her family from the threat imposed by President Snow. As she contemplates the notion of survival, she also struggles with the potential consequences of lying, which could undermine any authentic bond she and Peeta may have established. Furthermore, Katniss's unwavering dedication to her loved ones mirrors aspects of deontological ethics. In a societal context where survival is of utmost importance and ethical norms are skewed due to the oppressive governance of the Capitol, Katniss's actions exemplify Kantian principles of moral duty amidst adversity. Kantian ethics, as presented by Michael Sandel, emphasizes the significance of adhering to moral principles regardless of the consequences, giving precedence to the righteousness of actions over their outcomes (Sandel 2009, 114 - 124). In navigating the treacherous landscape of the Hunger Games, Katniss demonstrates a steadfast dedication to her responsibilities, driven by a sense of duty to protect and safeguard those she cares about. Her refusal to compromise her values, even in the face of imminent danger, underscores a deeper moral reasoning that transcends mere self-interest. By upholding her duty towards her family and allies, Katniss exemplifies the Kantian notion of moral integrity in the most challenging of circumstances, thereby illuminating the intricate interplay between duty and morality within her ethical framework.

When Peeta is captured by the Capitol, Katniss finds herself facing a moral dilemma that can be examined through the perspective of the Yogi and the Commissar. Arthur Koestler's essay, "The Yogi and the Commissar" (Koestler 1965, 15 - 20),

presents a thought-provoking analysis of the contrasting ideologies represented by these two figures. In Koestler's work, the Yogi symbolizes the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment and the adherence to moral principles based on inner values and universal truths. The Yogi embodies virtues such as honesty, compassion, and respect for individual rights, reflecting a deontological approach to ethics. Through the Yogi, Koestler emphasizes the significance of integrity, authenticity, and spiritual growth in guiding human behaviour. In stark contrast, the Commissar represents the pragmatic and often ruthless pursuit of political power and utilitarian objectives. Grounded in a utilitarian framework, the Commissar prioritizes the achievement of societal welfare and the greater good, often at the expense of individual rights and moral absolutes. The Commissar is motivated by a consequentialist mindset, where the ends justify the means, resulting in ethical dilemmas and moral compromises (15 - 20).

Katniss, from the Yogi's perspective, feels a deep personal connection to Peeta and is driven by her love and loyalty to him. She desires to save him not only for her own sake but also because she believes in the inherent value of his life and their relationship. However, from the Commissar perspective, Katniss recognizes the broader implications of Peeta's capture for the rebellion and the fight against the Capitol. She understands that rescuing Peeta could jeopardize the larger strategic goal of the rebellion and endanger the lives of other individuals. Thus, she grapples with the moral dilemma of whether to prioritize her desire or the greater good of the rebellion. Finding a balance between these conflicting perspectives, Katniss must weigh the importance of individual agency and love against the pragmatic necessities of the rebellion's mission.

In light of the moral quandary surrounding Peeta's capture by the Capitol, Katniss and the rebellion ultimately decide to attempt his rescue, a mission that they

ultimately succeed in. While Katniss is motivated by her deep personal connection to Peeta and her unwavering belief in the value of individual lives, the rebellion recognizes the potential strategic advantage of liberating a beloved symbol of hope from the clutches of the Capitol. However, the aftermath of Peeta's rescue introduces a new layer of moral complexity as it becomes evident that he has endured torture and been subjected to brainwashing by the Capitol. When Peeta and Katniss reunite after the rescue, he attempts to assassinate Katniss. This action serves as a stark reminder of the ethical dilemmas inherent in both acts of rescue and warfare. Katniss is compelled to confront the harsh reality of the Capitol's manipulation and the devastating toll it has taken on Peeta's psyche.

In conclusion, the developing relationship between Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark explores the intricate themes of morality, responsibility, and affection within the oppressive society of Panem. Beginning with their initial connection in the Hunger Games arena and progressing to the strategic use of their bond for survival, their narrative illustrates the fine line between individual principles and societal duties. Katniss's ethical decision-making, shaped by her environment and encounters, showcases a conflict between empathy and practicality, obligation and personal gain. Ultimately, their tale underscores the lasting influence of love and ethics in the face of political unrest and tyranny. Through the fake love connection, Katniss and Peeta pave the way for rebellion, with Katniss's affection serving as a beacon of hope for a brighter tomorrow. This uprising compels Katniss to grapple with ethical dilemmas that extend beyond her immediate circle, impacting a broader community.

2.3. Fighting for the People

As mentioned by Barbara Gurr (2015, 66), Katniss quickly becomes a vital component of the district-based rebellion against the Capitol thanks to her lack of femininity and her toughness. She unwittingly places herself in this role but executes it flawlessly. From volunteering as a tribute to killing President Coin, Katniss endures numerous traumas, but each decision she makes is motivated by the greater good.

The first time when the people of the districts express empathy towards Katniss as a symbol of rebellion, Katniss remains oblivious to the fact that her actions have sparked future uprising against the Capitol. As mentioned above, when the little girl from District 11 dies, Katniss mourns her death and connects with the people through her feelings. They see her as an abused individual who represents their suffering. They not only connect with her through Rue but also through the whole trauma that comes with living in the lower levels of districts. First connection is then established through trauma bond, where they share the same kind of abuse (Herman 2015, 275).

Throughout the year leading up to the next Hunger Games, the inhabitants of the less affluent districts exhibited a heightened sense of empathy towards Katniss. Unbeknownst to her, she emerged as their beacon of hope in their struggle against the oppressive rule of the Capitol. Upon Katniss's return to the Hunger Games, President Snow endeavours to quell the people's uprising by bolstering his forces in the districts and deploying a number of his top-ranking police officials to ensure order is maintained. President Snow views the consolidation of forces as the sole means to maintain control over the people of Panem. The administration under his leadership and the government of Panem may be seen as a dictatorship. In such a political system, dictators maintain authority through oppression (Davenport, Johnston, and Mueller 2005, 58). Employing this aggressive method of control often provokes additional

opposition among the citizens (58 - 59). Due to the resilience exhibited by the people, Katniss successfully endures and overcomes all the obstacles presented to her within the arena.

Following the conclusion of the second Hunger Games, Katniss is resolute in her commitment to advocate for the well-being of the people and strive for a brighter tomorrow. Her unwavering determination serves as a source of inspiration for several former victors and the inhabitants of the districts. The aforementioned projected determination leads to the phenomenon of identity fusion within a group. Identity fusion occurs when an individual's emotions and sense of self as a fused entity are projected onto others. (Swan et al. 2012, 441 - 442). As noted by Swan et al. (443), strong identity fusion leads group members to exhibit a willingness to make sacrifices for the collective good. This fusion of identity is not only manifested by an individual towards a group but also reciprocated by the group towards the individual. Consequently, Katniss was inspired to intensify her resistance against the oppressive political regime, fuelled by the support and solidarity of her fellow district members.

Additionally, Katniss demonstrates a strong dedication to the liberation of the districts following her visit to the hospital in Chapter 7. It can be clarified by examining Lawrence Kohlberg's post-conventional stage of moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1981, 411 - 412). This stage surpasses individual interests and conformity to societal norms, prioritizing the pursuit of universal ethical principles for the greater good (411 - 412). The decision made by Katniss to champion the cause of freedom serves as a prime example of this stage, as she skilfully manoeuvres through ethical dilemmas while demonstrating an acute understanding of the wider consequences of her choices. In the post-conventional stage, individuals are encouraged to engage in critical evaluation of moral principles and to act according to their conscience, even when such actions may

conflict with established rules or norms (412). Katniss's evolving moral reasoning demonstrates her dedication to principles of justice and human dignity, leading her to prioritize the collective welfare of the oppressed districts over her own safety or personal gain.

Moreover, Bandura's (1999, 193) concept of moral disengagement provides further insights into Katniss's moral reasoning process. Bandura emphasizes (194 - 195) that individuals frequently utilize cognitive mechanisms to create psychological distance from the moral consequences of their actions, thus providing justification or rationalization for behaviours that could be considered immoral or unethical. In Katniss's case, her visit to the hospital serves as a poignant reminder of the heinous acts committed by the Capitol, effectively questioning any potential moral disengagement she may have previously utilized to deal with the harsh realities of her society. When faced with the severe consequences endured by the people under the oppressive rule of the Capitol, Katniss finds herself unable to ignore the suffering any longer. Instead, she is profoundly moved by a strong sense of compassion and ethical duty, compelling her to actively seek justice and freedom. Through her actions, Katniss exemplifies the transformative potential of post-conventional moral reasoning, showcasing individuals' ability to surpass self-interest and strive towards a fair and equitable society.

During the rise of the rebels turning into a revolution, Katniss again appears on the scene when she becomes the Mockingjay, the symbol of rebellion. By becoming the Mockingjay, Katniss embraces her position as a figurehead for the rebellion. From the Commissar perspective, she recognizes the necessity of her role in motivating the district people to unite against tyranny. She understands the power of symbols and rhetoric in mobilizing the masses, and is willing to leverage her influence for the

greater good, even if it means compromising her personal beliefs. As already mentioned, the Commissar perspective prioritizes the collective good over the individual freedoms (Koestler 1965, 17 - 18). However, on the other hand, from the Yogi perspective, which focuses on the individual (18), Katniss also embodies the value of individual autonomy and integrity. She is hesitant to become a pawn in the rebellion against the Capitol. She struggles with the idea of sacrificing her own well-being for the sake of the revolution, questioning whether her actions truly align with her sense of morality:

What they want is for me to truly take on the role they designed for me. The symbol of revolution. The Mockingjay. It isn't enough, what I've done in the past, defying Capitol in the Games, providing a rallying point. I must now become the actual leader, the face, the voice, the embodiment of the revolution. The person who the districts – most of which are now openly in war with the Capitol – can count on to blaze the path to victory. (Collins 2010, 10)

In this way, Katniss's journey as the Mockingjay embodies the moral complex of rebellion, navigating the tension between individual integrity and collective responsibility in the fight against oppression. Katniss, nevertheless, visibly inclines to the Commissar perspective more, and willingly becomes the symbol of revolution against the Capitol.

This, however, must certainly not be understood in an absolute sense, nor taken out of context. As previously stated, Katniss grapples with the notion of deliberately taking another person's life, despite being compelled to do so by the Hunger Games and the governing authorities. The challenges she faced bear resemblance to the previously mentioned trolley problem outlined by Michael Sandel in his (2009,

22 - 23) book *What's the Right Thing to Do?*; she is confronted with the weighty choice of either terminating lives and aiding countless individuals or permitting the government to inflict ruin upon them. Subsequently, a similar scenario unfolds as Katniss takes the life of President Coin. In this instance, President Coin assumes the role of the only individual on the tracks, while the children of the Capitol and their families represent the five workers. Katniss, in this particular circumstance, decides to manipulate the railroad switch.

In summary, the narrative of Katniss's involvement in the rebellion against the Capitol is characterized by her steadfast resilience and unwavering commitment to justice. From her initial role as a tribute in the Hunger Games to her reluctant acceptance of the Mockingjay title, Katniss grapples with the complexities of morality and responsibility in the face of oppression. As Katniss emerges as a beacon of hope for the districts, she struggles with the conflict between her responsibility to the collective cause and her personal beliefs. In the end, she aligns herself with the collective fight against tyranny. Subsequently, her moral dilemmas come to a critical point as she is compelled to consider the ultimate act of defiance: either taking a life or allowing hundreds to perish. With the fate of Panem hanging in the balance, Katniss must summon all her moral resolve to navigate this pivotal moment, where the line between justice and vengeance blurs.

2.4. Killing President Coin

When Katniss is on the verge of taking over the Capitol, a bombing occurs at the gates, resulting in the deaths of multiple Capitol civilians and medical personnel from the rebellion who are there to assist them. Among the medical aid workers is Katniss's younger sister, Prim. In that moment, Katniss witnesses the death of her beloved sister,

whom she affectionately referred to as her little duckling throughout the story. Katniss is devastated, but she still manages to think clearly.

After the rebels take over the Capitol, President Coin suggests that instead of ending the Hunger Games, they should remake them in their image and force the Capitol children to participate, so the Capitol people would know what it feels like. Katniss votes yes, but it is possible that this decision is a lie because she may have known about the fact that Coin was behind the bombing and not Snow.

In the book, it is not clear if Katniss knows, but in the movie, President Snow himself tells her that it was not him who killed the people, and that he is not “wasteful” when it comes to taking lives. This discovery leads Katniss to the decision of killing Coin instead of Snow. This decision is clearly utilitarian: if Katniss does not kill Coin, then the regime will not change and the people would still suffer. In this context, the death of President Coin might be seen as a small price to pay for the benefit of thousands. However, a problem with this decision is its morality, as Katniss takes another person’s life. Even if her death brings happiness to others, it still fails to consider her individual rights (Sandel 2009, 37).

We can also examine this situation through the lens of the morality of murder. Michael Sandel, in his book *What’s the Right Thing to Do?* (2009, 32 - 33), identifies two approaches to justice: consequential and deontological. The first, consequential thinking, considers murder as a means for the greater good because of its beneficial consequences. However, on the other hand, the second, deontological thinking, considers murder as murder, no matter the benefits (33). Therefore, Katniss’s thinking in this situation is based on the consequential view of murder.

This consequential way of thinking is closely connected to another framework of understanding: model-based valuation (Crockett 2013, 363). In this model-based

approach to moral dilemmas, we assess all the actions that can be done and their possible outcomes. Based on this calculation, we opt to choose the one with the most beneficial aspects and execute it (363 - 365). If we establish the correlation between consequential thinking and the model-based system, it becomes evident that Katniss was compelled to meticulously evaluate all potential courses of action available to her and ultimately opt for the one that promised the most advantageous outcome. This action likely rescued a significant number of the Capitol children whom President Coin intended to subject to the arena, resulting in their untimely demise as a consequence of their elders' actions. Katniss considers these issues in the following manner:

Was it like this then? Seventy-five years or so ago? Did a group of people sit around and cast their votes on initiating the Hunger Games? Was there dissent? Did someone make a case for mercy that was beaten down by the calls for the death of the districts children? [...] All those people I loved, dead, and we are discussing the next Hunger Games in attempt to avoid wasting life. Nothing has changed. Nothing will ever change. (Collins 2010, 370)

Through the integration of consequential thinking with the model-based valuation framework, it is evident that Katniss conducts a comprehensive analysis of potential actions in order to determine the most beneficial outcome. This approach effectively saves numerous children from a bleak destiny planned by President Coin. Katniss reflects on this dilemma, questioning if similar debates occurred in the past, emphasizing the recurring pattern of human cruelty despite attempts to justify it. Her introspection emphasizes the ongoing struggle for change in a world where sacrificing innocent lives is debated to prevent further loss, a stark reminder of the perpetual moral quandaries faced by society.

As previously stated, the moral reasoning associated with gender in the critical thinking of women primarily revolves around a care-based approach rooted in empathy and emotions (Cordellieri et al. 2020, 360). If the assassination of President Coin had not been carried out by Katniss, then numerous children would have died, and Katniss would have had to bear the burden of responsibility for their deaths. Despite lacking personal acquaintance with the children, she arguably harbours a profound sense of empathy towards them due to her shared experience as one of them.

On the other hand, Katniss's personal investment in killing President Coin can be attributed to the profound emotional impact of her sister's death, compounded by Coin's orchestration of the bombing attack that resulted in this loss. Katniss found out about President Coin's and Plutarch's, the right hand of president Coin, involvement through her meeting with President Snow. During that meeting, President Snow explains to Katniss the situation:

“However, I must concede it was a masterful move on Coin's part. The idea that I was bombing our own helpless children instantly snapped whatever frail allegiance my people still felt for me. There was no real resistance after that. Did you know it air live? You can see Plutarch's hand there. And in the parachutes. Well, it's that sort of thinking that you look for in a Head Gamemaker, isn't it? [...] I'm sure he wasn't gunning for your sister, but these things happen.” (Collins 2010, 357)

Thanks to this conversation, Katniss realizes the truth of the bombing. This realization plays to her emotional side. As a woman, Katniss experiences a complex interplay of emotions, including grief, anger, and a profound sense of betrayal. These emotions may have clouded her judgment, leading her to perceive Coin as the ultimate antagonist deserving of retribution. As a woman, Katniss experiences a complex

interplay of emotions, including grief, anger, and a profound sense of betrayal. These emotions may have clouded her judgment, leading her to perceive Coin as the ultimate antagonist deserving of retribution. As previously mentioned by Cordellieri et al. (2020, 360) women tend to have a more relational and emotionally oriented approach to moral reasoning. This perspective emphasizes the importance of interpersonal relationships and empathy, aligning with Katniss's deep emotional connection to her sister and her community. However, this emotional investment may have also clouded her judgment, potentially hindering her ability to critically assess the consequences of her actions and consider alternative paths towards achieving justice. Therefore, while Katniss's personal motivations for targeting President Coin are understandable given the circumstances, they also underscore the complex interplay between emotion and moral reasoning in shaping individuals' actions.

Upon the assassination of President Coin by Katniss, she becomes acutely aware of the impending repercussions. She harbours an aversion towards confronting the aftermath that inevitably follows the act of eliminating the prospective ruler of Panem, thus opting to take her own life. The contemplation of suicide by Katniss provides a deep examination of moral reasoning and the intricate nature of ethical decision-making. By utilizing Kohlberg's stages of moral development, it is possible to examine the internal struggle experienced by Katniss in terms of moral quandaries and the advancement towards more elevated levels of moral reasoning (Kohlberg 1981,409). According to Kohlberg (409 - 412), individuals progress through six stages of moral development, starting from a pre-conventional level centred on self-interest and advancing to a post-conventional stage characterized by commitment to universal ethical principles. Katniss's initial inclination towards suicide is indicative of a crisis at the conventional level, as she grapples with conflicting moral imperatives and

personal trauma. Nevertheless, her ultimate decision to reject suicide indicates a transition towards a post-conventional mindset marked by a dedication to justice and the welfare of others. This transition is analogous to Kohlberg's concept of moral development, in which individuals surpass self-centred concerns and adopt more comprehensive ethical considerations. (409 - 412).

Ultimately, Katniss's decision to assassinate President Coin reflects a complex interplay of Utilitarian reasoning, emotional distress, and gender-related perspectives. Motivated by a desire to maximize the greater good and prevent further oppression, Katniss strategically chooses to eliminate Coin, saving countless innocent lives in the process. However, her decision is also influenced by her profound emotional connection to her sister Prim and her feeling of betrayal upon discovering Coin's involvement in the bombing. Through her contemplation of suicide and eventual rejection of self-destructive tendencies, Katniss exemplifies a progression towards a more elevated understanding of justice and moral principles.

3. Traumatic Experiences and Mental Health

In the dystopian universe of Panem, created by Suzanne Collins, Katniss's journey emerges as a vivid portrayal of resilience amidst relentless trauma. This chapter ponders into the depths of the trauma that courses through Katniss's veins throughout the Hunger Games series. From losing her loved ones to fighting for life in deadly situations, Katniss's narrative unfolds as a poignant testament to the human spirit's ability to endure, adapt, and persevere through the darkest of trails.

Throughout the story, Katniss's narrative provides a look on her battle with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Collins's text offers a detailed portrayal of the complexities of PTSD, shedding a light on the countless ways in which trauma can manifest and the toll it takes on one's mind, body and spirit. Those effects manifest in the form of nightmares, haunting flashbacks or as an inability to express one's own feelings.

In the following subchapters, I analyse the complex characteristics of trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, exploring the complexity of these conditions and the various factors that influence one's life. Through a combination of academic insight and Collins's narrative, Katniss's traumatic experiences and potential journey towards recovery is investigated.

3.1. Trauma

Arguably, Katniss embarks on a dangerous journey filled with trauma from the moment she volunteers as tribute to protect her sister, Prim, from the Hunger Games. Her experiences extend far beyond the confines of the arena, encompassing the trials she faces in the oppressive regime of Panem, her struggles with loss and betrayal, and the weight of responsibility placed upon her shoulders. These cumulative traumas

shape her character and resonate throughout the series, influencing her decisions and emotional well-being.

Trauma encompasses a diverse range of psychological and emotional reactions to overwhelming experiences that may occur either singularly or persist over an extended period. Traumatic experiences can be categorized into two distinct groups: the first being disasters, which are predominantly caused by natural phenomena, and the second being atrocities, which are primarily perpetrated by fellow human beings (Herman 2015, 33). Judith Herman (33 - 34) posits that trauma is a significant disturbance to an individual's feelings of safety, trust, and stability, resulting from events that surpass their ability to cope. The person who experienced the trauma is overwhelmed by the feelings of helplessness and terror. The severity of trauma cannot be quantified, however, there exist distinct indicators that increase the probability of detrimental consequences. These indicators include being caught off guard, feeling confined or trapped, enduring exhaustive exposure, encountering physical violation or injury, being subjected to extreme violence, or bearing witness to gruesome fatalities (33 - 34). Katniss encounters all of these indicators throughout her journey, especially within the confines of the Hunger Games arena.

The investigation conducted by Andrew Moskowitz regarding dissociative reactions frequently associated with trauma provides insight into the significant disintegration of one's identity experienced by individuals such as Katniss when confronted with immense distress (Moskowitz et. al. 2019, 18). Dissociation, functioning as a coping mechanism, acts as a defence mechanism against unbearable encounters, resulting in a detachment from one's thoughts, emotions, and sense of self. Amidst the trauma, the individual's identity becomes fragmented, breaking into disconnected components as a means of self-protection (Moskowitz, et. al. 2019,

17 - 19). Katniss's journey provides a poignant illustration of the dissociative responses that often accompany trauma, showcasing the profound fragmentation of the self in the face of overwhelming distress. During her challenging experiences in the Hunger Games and the turbulent aftermath of her father's death, Katniss struggles with moments of detachment and disorientation reminiscent of dissociative responses. In the arena, she finds herself disconnected from her own emotions, adopting a stoic façade to shield herself from the horrors unfolding around her. The act of dissociation functions as a mechanism for self-preservation, enabling her to segregate her fear and sorrow to prioritize her survival.

The sweetness spreads through my mouth, down my throat, warming my veins with memories of summer, and my home woods and Gale's presence beside me. For some reason, our discussion from that last morning comes back to me.

"We could do it, you know."

"What?"

"Leave the district. Run off. Live in the woods. You and I, we could make it." (Collins 2008, 196)

Following the encounter with the trackerjackers, genetically modified bees created by the game makers, Katniss experiences a detachment from the intense pain she is suffering. With the venom spreading through her bloodstream and posing a threat to her well-being, she seeks solace in her memories. Evoking memories of more joyful moments, Katniss endeavours to find solace from the persistent anguish of the current circumstances. During these instances of dissociation, she envisions the potential for a new future, free from the pain and cruelty of the arena. Through the lens of trauma theory, Katniss's dissociative reaction provides insight into the significant

ways in which individuals cope with the overwhelming burden of their experiences, forging pathways to resilience amidst the darkness (Herman 2015, 238 - 240).

Due to the multitude of traumatic experiences Katniss endures, she acquires what is commonly referred to as the “fight or flight” response, a primal survival mechanism triggered in response to overwhelming distress. This instinctual reaction involves the activation of the autonomic nervous system, resulting in increased arousal and preparedness for action. An individual confronted with such circumstances will push through the discomfort he may be feeling and continue to undertake the essential actions required for survival (Herman 2015, 35 - 36). In the arena, Katniss’s survival depends on her capacity to utilize the primal instincts of the “fight or flight” reaction, whether she is involved in intense combat or attempting to flee from danger in a desperate attempt to secure her survival. Her heightened vigilance and acute awareness of her surroundings serve as evidence of the adaptable characteristics of trauma. Katniss acknowledges this survival instinct in the following quote:

Every sense I have goes into overdrive as the need to survive takes over. There’s no time to judge if a move is the correct one. When there’s a hiss, I act or die. Something keeps me moving forward, though. A lifetime of watching the Hunger Games lets me know that certain areas of the arena are rigged for certain attacks. And that is I can just get away from this section, I might be able to move out of reach. (Collins 2008, 175)

In this given circumstance, Katniss demonstrates the “fight or flight” response commonly observed in traumatic situations, as she flees for her life. Despite the lack of food and rest, she pushes past the discomfort and battles for survival. In that instance, she encounters an increased state of physical strength.

Additionally, Forter's analysis of trauma and literary form (2007, 263) sheds light on the ways in which the "fight or flight" response intersects with narrative structures, particularly in the context of traumatic experiences. Forter delves into how trauma disrupts conventional storytelling conventions, often mirroring the fragmented nature of the "fight or flight" response itself. The disruption becomes apparent in the case of Katniss through the employment of a nonlinear and disjointed narrative in depicting her journey through the Hunger Games. The trauma Katniss experiences gives rise to a rupture within the very fabric of her reality, resulting in fragmented recollections, disconnected cogitations, and a profound feeling of disorientation. This fragmentation is reflected in the narrative structure of her story, where moments of intense action and peril are juxtaposed with introspective reflections and flashbacks to happier times (267). Through this fragmented narrative Katniss's trauma is not only depicted but also embodied in the very form of her story, blurring the boundaries between the internal and external landscapes of her experience.

Furthermore, Forter's analysis of trauma and literary structure underscores the role of storytelling as a tool for coping with and navigating trauma. Through exploration of Katniss's fragmented narrative, readers are encouraged to witness her challenges and victories, providing insight into the intricate nature of trauma and its lasting effects on the human mind. Forter's perspective enhances our comprehension of Katniss's evolution as not just a survivor, but also as a storyteller whose tale serves as a testament to the strength of the human spirit in unimaginable hardships.

As previously mentioned, trauma can be classified into two categories: atrocities and disasters (Herman 2015, 33). Atrocities encompass deliberate acts of harm or violence, such as deaths of fellow tributes and the Capitol's and later also President Coin's attacks resulting in multiple fatalities, including the tragic demise of Katniss's

younger sister, Prim. Disasters, on the other hand, are orchestrated by the game makers to heighten the challenges faced by Katniss within the arena. These disasters include extensive forest fires, corrosive fog, a powerful tidal wave, and even a rain of blood. Each of these distressing occurrences pushes Katniss to her physical and psychological limits, serving as a test of her resilience. Through these harrowing experiences, Katniss confronts the vulnerability of life and the harsh realities of her world, grappling with the enduring impact of trauma on her psyche.

Katniss's hectic journey through trauma provides a deep exploration of human resilience and the ability to adapt in the face of overwhelming adversity. From the moment she made her initial sacrifice to protect her sister from the horrors of the Hunger Games to her confrontations with heinous acts orchestrated by the Capitol and disasters engineered by the game makers, Katniss navigates a world of relentless challenges that test her strength, courage, and sanity. Her experiences shed light on the complexities of coping mechanisms and the invincible strength discovered in the face of overwhelming hardships. This serves as a beacon of hope and motivation for readers confronting their trials. Given Katniss's journey through trauma, her experiences provide a significant transition into exploring the profound impact of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), shedding light on the lasting psychological consequences of her difficult challenges in the Hunger Games arena and beyond.

3.2. PTSD

Katniss's time in the Hunger Games significantly resembles the experiences of soldiers coming back home from combat missions, particularly in the manifestation of what was historically termed "shell shock" and what is now recognized as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Judith Herman (Herman 2015, 34 - 35) presents

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a complex psychological condition that manifests in response to exposure to traumatic events. This psychological condition significantly impacts the individual's sense of self and their ability to navigate the world. Individuals with PTSD often find themselves haunted by intrusive memories of the traumatic event, experiencing flashbacks and nightmares that blur the boundaries between past and present. According to Robinett (2007, 302 - 303), the recollections in question are characterized by their remarkable clarity and intricate portrayal of past events, accompanied by hallucinatory elements. These elements are evident in the narrative when Katniss encounters her sister in the kitchen and is momentarily deceived into perceiving Prim as Rue.

Bam! It's like someone actually hits me in the chest. No one has, of course, but the pain is so real I take a step back. I squeeze my eyes shut and I don't see Prim – I see Rue, the twelve-year-old girl from District 11 who was my ally in the arena. She could fly, birdlike, from tree to tree, catching onto the slenderest branches. Rue, who I didn't save. Who I let die. I picture her lying on the ground with the spear still wedged in her stomach... (Collins 2009, 40 - 41)

This quote further highlights one of the three primary classifications of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, known as "intrusion." Intrusion emerges once the threat has subsided and is characterized by the occurrence of distressing flashbacks and distressing nightmares (Herman 2015, 37). A significant reminder causes Katniss to experience a flashback to the distressing moment of Rue's death and the excruciating pain it inflicted upon her.

Furthermore, a significant aspect of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder involves self-destructive thoughts. Jonathan Shay (1995, 50, 179) highlights how moral

dilemmas, closely linked to PTSD, can lead to profound existential crises and suicidal thoughts among combat veterans. Katniss's internal conflict, stemming from her role in Coin's death and the ethical dilemmas she faces, reflects the profound moral and psychological consequences of guilt induced by trauma. Therefore, Katniss's contemplation of suicide serves as a poignant portrayal of the intricate relationship between PTSD and suicidal thoughts, mirroring the real-life struggles of individuals dealing with the aftermath of trauma. Katniss considers suicide as her way out: "If I can't kill myself in this room, I will take the first opportunity outside of it to finish the job." (Collins 2010, 377)

After the tragic loss of her sister, Katniss is confronted with overwhelming feelings of grief. It is common for individuals to struggle with articulating their emotions following a traumatic event (Lapugean 2015, 87 - 88). This is evident when Katniss, upon her return to District 12, finds herself unable to convey to Prim's cat, Buttercup, that Prim will never return. The only words Katniss can manage to utter are: "She's dead!" (Collins 2010, 386). As noted by Pederson's lens (2014, 88), Katniss is incapable of verbalizing the indescribable horror of her sister's passing.

Moreover, Herman (2015, 34 - 35) underscores the fact that individuals afflicted with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder after a distressing incident often exhibit signs of irritability, heightened emotional sensitivity, and even aggression. In the particular instance when Katniss endeavours to explain the situation to Buttercup, her demeanour is marked by intense irritation, as she screams her words at him. Collins adeptly portrays the reality of the aftermath of traumatic encounters and the challenges entailed in coping with Post-Traumatic Stress.

Not only in the movies, but also in the last book's epilogue, it becomes evident that Katniss continues to grapple with post-traumatic stress disorder, while Peeta

appears to be unaffected, at least from her perspective. Peeta serves as Katniss's primary source of support, aiding her in coping with her nightmares and distressing thoughts. Despite the destruction of the arena and the ending of the Hunger Games, Katniss remains profoundly affected, enduring a lingering state of brokenness that mirrors the protracted healing process typically experienced by individuals afflicted with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

But one day I'll have to explain about my nightmares. Why they came. Why they won't ever really go away. I'll tell them how I survived it. I'll tell them that one bad morning, it feels impossible to take pleasure in anything because I'm afraid it could be taken away (Collins 2010, 389 - 340).

In conclusion, Suzanne Collins's portrayal of Katniss's journey offers a profound understanding of the parallel experiences of individuals struggling with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Through Katniss's harrowing experiences in the Hunger Games arena and the aftermath that follows, Collins masterfully illustrates the complex manifestations of PTSD, including intrusive memories, flashbacks, self-destructive thoughts, and heightened emotional sensitivity. This analysis highlights the lasting effects of trauma on an individual's mental state and identity by drawing comparisons between Katniss's challenges and the ordeals faced by combat veterans. Moreover, Katniss's contemplation of suicide following the assassination of President Coin serves as a poignant depiction of the profound ethical and psychological consequences of triggered by traumatic experiences, highlighting the intricate relationship between PTSD and suicidal thoughts. Through Peeta's unwavering support and Katniss's resilience, Collins captures the arduous journey towards healing and reconciliation amidst profound loss and trauma. Ultimately,

Katniss's journey serves as an insight into the life of a person struggling with the aftermath of traumatic experiences and the mental health problems it causes.

Conclusion

As shown above, the contrast of Katniss Everdeen's moral reasoning amidst her encounters with trauma and PTSD uncovers a complex interplay between ethical dilemmas and emotional resilience. Throughout Suzanne Collins's narrative, Katniss is faced with a multitude of moral quandaries, ranging from the initial sacrifice to save her sister Prim to the ultimate decision to confront and challenge the oppressive regime of Panem. Just as importantly, it is argued that these moral choices are not made in a state of isolation, but they are deeply intertwined with Katniss's emotional landscape, which is significantly influenced by the traumatic experiences she endures.

The profound distress she endures compels her to exhibit behaviour that may appear less rational than that of an individual unaffected by PTSD. Furthermore, her moral deliberations are often influenced by the imperative of self-preservation, a consequence of her past traumatic encounters and the subsequent activation of the "fight or flight" response. Yet, even amidst these challenges, Katniss grapples with notions of the greater good, balancing the needs of the many against her personal feelings and desires.

The emotional state of Katniss as a woman is a key factor in the relationship between her trauma and moral reasoning. It has been noted that women often prioritize emotions over rationality in their actions. Consequently, Katniss's PTSD, stemming from her traumatic experiences, greatly impacts her decision-making abilities.

Moreover, even if Katniss thinking was based on the Utilitarian perspective of moral thinking, her thoughts were still influenced by her emotions. The impact of witnessing the deaths of fellow tributes deeply affected her. Consequently, when faced with the possibility of the Capitol children's demise at Coin's hands, her emotions

drove her to opt for the lesser of two evils to avoid the anguish of witnessing the death of innocent children again, even if it was from afar.

The connection between moral decision-making, trauma, and PTSD within Katniss Everdeen's narrative serves as a poignant exploration of the multifaceted nature of the human experience, particularly within the context of gender expectations. Through Katniss's struggles and triumphs, she emerges not just as a symbol of defiance and resilience, but also as a testament to the enduring power found in empathy and compassion in the face of adversity. As such, her story offers valuable insights into the intricate relationship between morality, trauma, and emotional resilience.

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